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New Man at the CIA

Richard M. Helms is the first career agent to head the Central Intelligence Agency.

Consequently, to an even greater degree than usual, most Americans and most members of Congress will have to rely on a few clues and a great deal of faith in the President in speculating on Helm's appointment.

Helms succeeds retired Vice Admiral William F. Raborn, who was not an intelligence professional and whose limitations as CIA director contrasted with the abilities he displayed in the Navy. There seems no reason to think that the White House was hasty in naming Mr. Helms; he seems to be generally regarded as a skillful professional and his appointment is popular within the agency.

In recent years, the CIA's reputation has been repeatedly shaken by manifestations of professional ineptitude and ill-conceived excursions that have frustrated, rather than promoted, the international objectives of the U.S. If Mr. Helms' administration begins a new era, it will be welcome many times over.

We especially hope he will be more flexible than Admiral Raborn on the critical matter of establishing CIA liaison with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Admiral Raborn was hardly noted for a deep interest in foreign affairs and he resisted this liaison to the last. Mr. Helms could make no better beginning on his new tour of duty than by acknowledging the necessity to broaden responsible Congressional surveillance of the CIA.